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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000833

SIPDIS

STATE FOR NEA AND NEA/MAG
TRIPOLI AND TUNIS FOR THE SECRETARY'S PARTY AND NEA A/S
WELCH

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SUBJECT: MOROCCAN MFA ON THE ARAB LEAGUE MEETING AND NORTH
AFRICA

REF: STATE 093939

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Classified By: Political Counselor Craig Karp for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY: In preparation for the Arab League Ministerial, MFA Director General for Arab and Islamic Affairs Mohamed Azeroual told us that the League had no mechanism to block attendance by Mauritanian junta representatives. He maintained that democracy continued to function there and that Morocco had pressed for restoration of constitutional rule. Morocco had good ties with the coup leaders, but Algeria was trying to undermine the post-coup government, which Algiers feared it would not be able to control. He said Syria's quest for a seat on the IAEA Board of Governors was better blocked in Vienna than in Cairo. Looking forward to the visit of the Secretary to North Africa, he averred that the GOM was sincerely dedicated to restoring Moroccan-Algerian relations, but it had received no positive feedback. "We are ready to go tomorrow, if they agree," he said. End summary.

[12](#). (C) On September 4, PolCouns met with Mohamed Azeroual, Director General of Multilateral Affairs (U/S equivalent responsible for Arab and Islamic issues) at the Moroccan Ministry of Foreign Affairs to convey reftel points on the September 8-9 Arab League Ministerial. Azeroual appreciated the timeliness of the demarche. He expected to depart with Minister Fassi Fihri for the Ministerial shortly after the planned visit to Morocco by the Secretary, on September 6 and [17](#).

MAURITANIA

[13](#). (C) Azeroual said he expected the Foreign Minister of Mauritania will attend the AL ministerial. The AL has no power to stop or exclude delegations. Azeroual said that there was no possibility to suspend the relationship.

[14](#). (C) Azeroual stressed that what happens to Mauritania affects Moroccan national security. General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, the leader of Mauritania's military junta who carried out the coup, has strong ties to Morocco. He previously studied in Meknes and his family currently resides in Casablanca and Meknes. Azeroual maintained that even though the President of Mauritania has been removed, Mauritanian democracy continues. He said that the Mauritanian parliament and political parties continued to function. Only the Council of Ministers and President had changed.

15. (C) Azeroual believed that the Government had to change because the former President could not rule effectively. He maintained that the majority of Mauritians supported the coup. The brother of the former President, Ould Daddah, had entered into the new coalition. Azeroual said that Morocco has engaged with the junta leaders to encourage full democracy. Azeroual noted that he already had been heavily lobbied by the Europeans in support of restoring the deposed Mauritanian Government to power, and had given them the same answers, counseling patience.

16. (C) Azeroual observed that of the Arab League members, only Algeria has condemned the coup. The Algerians were working hard against the results of the coup, including those in regional or international organizations. African Union official Lamarra is Algerian and has pushed for a strong stance on the Mauritania coup. The U.N. envoy to West Africa was also an Algerian.

SYRIA

17. (C) In general, Azeroual noted the Syrians were in a strong position in the Arab League, since they currently hold its presidency. The Arab League Ministerial would not be an effective venue to block Syria's effort to gain support for a seat on the IAEA Board of Governors. In Azeroual's opinion, no member of the League would be able to say no to Syria at this ministerial. Speaking personally, he believed that blocking the Syrian quest could be best managed at the IAEA in Vienna and not in Cairo. (Note: Morocco is a member of the IAEA Board of Governors. End note.)

GOM RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA

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18. (C) In the run-up to the Secretary's Maghreb tour, Azeroual observed that there are currently no senior level GOM contacts with Algeria, although some technical level contact continues. Morocco continues to extend an open hand to the Algerians and is looking to advance relations, but Algeria is not interested. On September 3, King Mohammed VI issued another statement expressing his willingness to cooperate with the Algerians. Azeroual repeated, "We are ready to go there tomorrow -- at any level."

ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN PEACE

19. (C) Azeroual said it will be necessary to look toward the Gulf for funding for the Palestinians, but Morocco remained prepared to provide security-related training. The GOM has long supported peace efforts.

COMMENT

110. (C) Azeroual's candid remarks on Mauritania suggest GOM ties to the junta may be closer than we had previously understood, given his description of Moroccan interests as vital. It appears Mauritania may have become another proxy field for playing out the Morocco-Algeria rivalry. That said, and given its visceral opposition to military rule, Moroccan influence likely will increase the prospects for near term restoration of at least a semblance of legitimate constitutional rule. End comment.

111. (U) Tripoli Minimize considered.

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